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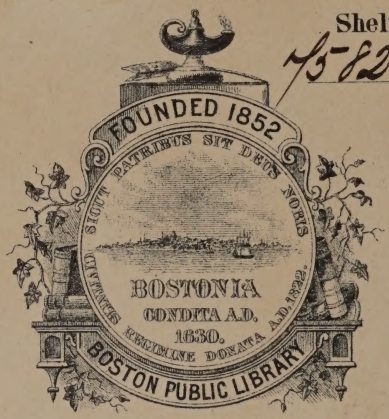

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REV. DR. STORRS'S SERMON

ON

American Slavery, and the Means of its Removal,

PREACHED ON THE DAY OF

THE ANNUAL STATE FAST,

April 4, 1844.

AMERICAN SLAVERY, AND THE MEANS OF ITS REMOVAL.

A

SERMON,

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PREACHED IN THE

FIRST CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH, BRAINTREE,

APRIL 4, 1844.

BY RICHARD S. STORRS, D.D.
Pastor of the Church.

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Mrs. R. A. Nichols,
Oct. 18, 1893.

SERMON.

PSALM LXXIII. 8.

"THEY ARE CORRUPT, AND SPEAK WICKEDLY CONCERNING OPPRESSION; THEY SPEAK LOFTILY."

CORRUPT men have lived in all generations—practical atheists, disregarding alike the claims of God on their homage, and the claims of men on their justice and compassion. "Pride hath compassed them about as a chain, and violence hath covered them as a garment." One saith, "Who is the Lord that I should obey his voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, nor will I let Israel go." Another exclaims, "Who are they among all the gods of these lands, that have delivered their land out of my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of my hand?" Nor are cases like those of Pharaoh and Senacherib few or rare. Theirs is the spirit of the world at large. In them, elevation of rank gives it prominency; but in stations of comparative obscurity it lives, and along the humblest walks of life multiplies its manifestations as far as release from restraints will permit.

The reason of this is found in man's moral constitution. He is shapen in iniquity, and conceived in sin. Hence, his works are works of iniquity, and violence is in his hands. Corrupt himself, he delights in corrupting others.

Departing from God, he speaks oppression and revolt, conceiving and uttering from the heart words of falsehood. There is no judgment in his goings, but he makes him crooked paths and knows no peace. Thus, with a pencil of light, the hand of God portrays man's native character, throughout all his generations. The fear of God is not before his eyes. Love to man prompts not his movements. And though education, conscience, civil law, public opinion, and other circumstances may contribute to preserve him from the guilt of flagrant crime, yet God is not in all his thoughts, and self-interest in one shape or another controls his course of life.

On a day set apart like this for humiliation, fasting and prayer, with the recommendation of our rulers, that "with one accord we humbly approach the Supreme Ruler," and "with contrition of soul, acknowledge and confess our past sins and ingratitude," imploring their forgiveness through the merits of Christ, and devoutly supplicating other mercies—it is natural to inquire what sins we are chargeable with as individuals and a community—and what blessings of heaven are specially necessary to our enduring peace and prosperity.

Individual sins however are most appropriately recollected and confessed in the retirement of the closet; while those offences against God which are shared in common with our fellow men, are with propriety brought to remembrance in the midst of the great congregation.

It would not be difficult to draw up a long and dark catalogue of such public and social sins, as deeply involve our country in guilt, and expose us to heaven's judgments. Never can we confess too freely and penitently, that we are "a seed of evil doers"—"a sinful nation," laden with our own and the iniquities of our fathers. As no nation under heaven has been more highly favored, so on none falls more heavily the charge of ingratitude and perverseness, whether in our relation to God, as Governor among

the nations, or in our relations to our fellow men. The authority of Jehovah, binding us to honor him in all our ways, and to deal truly and faithfully with our BRETHREN, is but slightly acknowledged, either in the constitution of our government, or in the framing and execution of our laws; and the full extent to which it is practically disavowed, I shall not now attempt to show. But neither the first nor the second of the great commands on which all the law and the prophets hang, can be disregarded more by nations than individuals, with impunity.

It is a natural inquiry,

I. WHO ARE OUR BRETHREN?

God "hath made of one blood all nations of men, for to dwell on all the face of the earth." "Thou shall not abhor an Edomite, for he is thy brother." The savage cannibal of the Southern Pacific, the degraded fisherman of Labrador, the wild Indian of the woods, and the stupid native of Negroland, are as truly our brethren, as the more polished sons of European civilization, or of our own happy land.

And what is the law that binds us in our relations to the whole family of man? "All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." The light of the sun in the heavens is not more clear, than the light flowing from the throne of God on the question of man's duty to every descendant of Adam. Love him. Show him kindness. Treat him as a brother, even though he stand to thee, in the relation of the Samaritan to the Jew.

But are we as a nation obedient to this universal law of equity and kindness? Are none among us oppressed by unequal laws? Are none laden with burdens too grievous to be borne? Is there no yoke of bondage imposed on the friendless and helpless, who yet sustain the same relations to the universal Father, as ourselves—a yoke

that neither we nor our fathers were able to bear? Nothing is more clear nor alarming, than our national guilt, touching the civil thraldom and intellectual degradation of the millions living in the midst of us, in a state of involuntary and debasing servitude.

In this connection, it is a matter of some interest to notice the origin, progress, and effects of the system of slavery as at present existing among us.

It was in 1567, almost three hundred years ago, that England, the land of our fathers, first became interested in the slave trade. Sir John Hawkins, represented to be a man of generous spirit, and compassionate in his treatment of the unfortunate, has the unenviable notoriety of being the first Englishman who engaged in the traffic; and the success of his individual enterprise induced Elizabeth, who then held the throne, to protect and share its profits. The character of the queen is too well known to require comment on her course in this matter; and the generosity and tenderness of Hawkins are best appreciated in view of a fact which he himself exultingly relates, in giving an account of one of his expeditions—viz: "that he set fire to a city, of which the huts were covered with dry palm-leaves, and out of eight thousand inhabitants, he succeeded in seizing two hundred and fifty." These and other victims of his rapacity, fraudulently transported to the Spanish West Indies, were bartered for "sugar, ginger, and pearls," which in England were exchanged for the silver and gold! Strange inconsistency! Humanity, where is thy blush! But the adage is verified—"there is honor among thieves." And after all, the character of this man is not so singular, as it is offensive to the spirit of benevolence.

Two men, Thomas Keyser and John Smith, the latter a member of the church in Boston, fitted out a ship for the coast of Guinea in 1645, which returned with a cargo of slaves. "But throughout Massachusetts," says Ban-

croft, "the cry of justice was raised against them as malefactors and murderers."* The act was denounced by the magistrate, as expressly contrary to the law of God and the law of the country, and the guilty men were committed to prison for the offence; and, the representatives of the people, when they came together a few months afterwards, testified against the heinous crime of man-stealing, and ordered the negroes to be restored at the public charge to their native country, and sent with them a letter, expressing the indignation of the General Court at the wrongs inflicted on them. All this was honorably done, and deserves to be mentioned as exhibiting the character of the Massachusetts Legislature, a hundred and ninety-eight years ago.

But it was earlier than this—in August, 1620, the memorable year of the landing of our fathers at Plymouth, that a Dutch man-of-war landed twenty negroes for sale in Virginia; and this forms the sad epoch of the introduction of African slavery into what were then styled, "the English Colonies of America." For many years afterwards, the Hollanders continued to supply the Virginia market, and thenceforward the slave population continued slowly to increase.

Thus early do we mark the contrast between northern and southern character in relation to slavery. Massachusetts condemns the traffic, punishes the trader, and repairs the wrong committed. Virginia approves the trade, encourages the agents, and throws open her arms to receive the spoils of the man-stealer. I need not say that the contrast is equally palpable at this day, as two hundred years ago. Nor was it limited then to the single point of slavery. The original objects of the first settlers on James River, and those of the first settlers on Massachusetts Bay, were wholly diverse. The first sought only gain, and the last liberty of conscience in the worship of

* History of United States, vol. i. p. 174.

God; the first commenced their settlements with no higher aim than to secure ease and luxury to themselves and their posterity, and the last tempted the ocean, and braved the dangers of a bleak coast and howling wilderness, to ensure to themselves and their children the favor of God and the rewards of the just; the first disdained to labor with their own hands, and brought across the seas, the refuse and outcast population of the mother country to be their servants and menials, while the last relied wholly on their own manly energies, and the gracious providence of heaven for their subsistence. "Conditional servitude, under indentures or covenants," says the historian, "had from the first existed in Virginia. The servant stood to his master in the relation of a debtor, bound to discharge the cost of his emigration, by the entire employment of his powers for the benefit of his creditor." "And men who had been transported into Virginia, at an expense of eight or ten pounds, were sometimes sold for forty, fifty, and even sixty pounds. And this supply of white servants, or slaves became a regular business;—they were sold in England to be transported—and in Virginia they were re-sold to the highest bidder; like negroes they were to be purchased on ship board, as men buy horses at a fair."* This trade in white slaves, you will remark, commenced earlier than the trade in negroes, and was continued down, nearly to the year 1700—eighty years after the black slave trade commenced. And the only difference in the tenure by which the white slave and the black were severally held, was—that the white slave, if he lived long enough and worked hard enough, to remunerate his master the cost of his purchase, could claim emancipation; whereas the bondage of the black was perpetual. I refer to facts like these, not to stigmatize our southern brethren, but only to aid you in comprehending the origin, growth and inveteracy of the slave

* History of United States, vol. i. p. 175.

holding principle as exhibited to this day in Virginia, and all the States of which she is the mother.

Thus it was, that slavery arose in the United States, and gained the strong foothold it yet maintains. And how long "the accursed thing" shall continue, the reproach of a great people, boasting of liberty more loudly than any other nation, is known only to Him who sitteth in the heavens, and holdeth in derision the ungodly and their works. Unhappily the Constitution of our General Government throws the shield of its protection over it, and renders it all but invulnerable to attack. I say not that the original framers of that instrument intended to establish the system permanently; nor do I say that according to strict construction, the instrument must be so interpreted; but I do say, that since such a legal construction has been given it by the judicial authorities of the land, we can expect no other to be given it, till revolution in some form, peaceful or violent, shall change the existing mutual relations of the States.

So abhorrent are the principles of Slavery to those of the civil liberty for which we had contended seven years with Great Britain at the point of the sword; so obnoxious were they to the spirit of the North, and so ill satisfied with them were our brethren of the South, that the very terms, Slaves, and Slavery, as applicable to any portion of our population, you are aware, were carefully avoided in framing the Constitution. When the solemn declaration had been previously made before heaven and earth, that "all men are created free and equal," how could it have been otherwise? At that time, it was doubtless believed that a sentiment of repugnance to the principle of involuntary servitude was so widely diffused, and so thoroughly inwrought into every American bosom, that universal emancipation must inevitably follow at an early date. The North had no doubt of it. The South anticipated it.

Hence the compromise—the fatal compromise between

the freeman of the North, and the slave holder of the South. Never would the former have consented that every five slaves in the land should cast three votes on every question of political interest arising in the councils of the nation, had the continuance of the obnoxious system been foreseen—and never would the latter have dared to propose such a basis of union, had he foreseen the prodigious augmentation of slave property. At the South as well as the North, deep grief and blushing shame were then professed, at the palpable contradiction manifested between our avowed devotion to universal liberty, and the fact of our holding in bondage hundreds of thousands of our fellow men. And "the compromise" was looked to as a temporary expedient only, for reconciling conflicting interests, and preventing a disunion that must by necessity involve consequences disastrous and permanent. And had the same honesty of purpose, the same intelligent and philanthropic regard to human rights been in the ascendant at the South as at the North, all had even now been well. Ere this hour, the foot of the slave had ceased to press our country's soil; and instead of being what we now justly are, "a proverb and a byword among the nations," we had been a nation of FREEMEN!

When I speak thus freely of the South in contradistinction from the North, you will not understand me as implicating the entire southern population. I speak only of the slave holding part of it. There are non-slave holders south of the Potomac as well as north of it. The whole number of slave holders in the Southern States, is estimated at somewhat less than two hundred and fifty thousand *—scarcely exceeding the number of free voters in some single Northern States. At the same time, there are more than seven hundred and sixty thousand white men at the South who hold no slaves—most of them probably, because they are too poor to possess property of

* American Anti-Slavery Reporter.

so much value. None are permitted to vote however in the election of State officers, nor to hold office, (at least in some of the States,) without possessing very considerable property qualifications. In South Carolina, for example, no person can be elected governor, or lieutenant governor, unless he possess in his own right, a settled estate of £1,500 sterling, clear of debt; nor can he be elected to the senate, unless he have a clear freehold estate of the value of £300 sterling; nor can he be elected a representative, unless he possess a freehold estate of five hundred acres and ten negroes, or a real estate of £150 sterling, clear of debt; nor can he exercise the elective franchise in the choice of members of either branch of the legislature, unless he be a "free white man citizen of the State," and have a freehold of fifty acres of land, or a town lot. Such are the constitutional and legal qualifications prescribed for State officers and voters, by the State that claims to be the most thoroughly democratic in the Union. So far as similar legal provisions exist in other slave holding States, the reason is obvious why all the legislative and executive offices in them are found in the hands of slave holders, although in point of numbers they form not one fourth part of the free white male population.

The slave holders form a lordly aristocracy in every State where slavery is continued. Their habits of command over the slave, render them imperious in their intercourse with the poorer class of white freemen. "They speak lofuly." In wealth and knowledge, there is power. Wealth and knowledge are confined to the few, and therefore the few exercise a despotic sway over the many. To *you*, having the spirit of freemen ever wide awake, and disdaining the dictation of any man how much soever your superior in the adventitious circumstances of life, this may seem to be unaccountable—and you are ready to exclaim, 'Why do not these poverty stricken whites of the South rise at once in the majesty of their strength,

and burst these chains, and assert their rights as men, irrespective of wealth and rank, and lower the crest of these usurpers of their rights and privileges!' The answer is ready; they either do not comprehend, or appreciate, the value of these rights and privileges. They have not the means of information that we have; they have not our common schools, and academies, and colleges; they sit not under the droppings of the sanctuary as we do from Sabbath to Sabbath; they receive not instruction like us, either from the Bible, the periodical or the oral lecture. It was when Sir William Berkely was Governor of Virginia—and an abler provincial governor she never had—that he replied to an inquiry made of him by his government at home, "I thank God that there are no free schools nor printing presses, and I hope we shall not have them these hundred years." Nor is the spirit that dictated such a reply yet extinct in Virginia and among her slave holding sisters. Of the white population of Massachusetts, there is but one, in one hundred and sixty-six, unable to read. In South Carolina the proportion is one to seventeen. Of the white population of Connecticut, New Hampshire and Vermont united, there is but one in four hundred and fifty that cannot read. In Kentucky, Virginia, North Carolina, Georgia, Tennessee and Arkansas united, there is one in eleven that cannot read. Such is the comparative amount of education in the free States on the one hand, and the slave States on the other, as officially reported to the General Government. And then, of those enjoying the advantages of education in the slave States, few are not slave holders and their children. The poorer class of whites are little cared for, and are contented with their ignorance; and so long as "knowledge is power" the reason is clear, why Samson like, when shorn of his locks, they are unable to shake themselves from the cords with which they are bound.

But the same class of men who "speak wickedly con-

cerning oppression, and speak loftily," among the down trodden whites as well as blacks of the Southern States, bring the same spirit into our national councils, and manifest like contempt for the industrious and enterprising population of New England, as for their slaves and white brethren at home; the same language of defiance and lordly rebuke that is familiar to their tongues on the plantation, is poured forth in the halls of legislation; and the sacred right of petition is denied, and every request and "resolution," coming to them from a free State, and bearing against their peculiar and most cherished institution, is contumeliously thrown aside.

And it will not be denied, by those who have examined the subject, that the action of these two hundred and fifty thousand slaveholders has controlled the measures of the National Government ever since it came into operation. It has placed a slaveholder in the Presidential chair for forty-four years out of fifty-six. It has given almost all offices in the government to slaveholders and their sons; and with the fewest possible exceptions, our secretaries, judges, foreign ministers, army and naval officers have been selected from this class. It has denied naturalization to the free colored population of the country—excluded them from the militia—prohibited them even from driving a mail wagon, and subjected them to other odious restrictions on their liberty, beside exposing them to the forfeiture of their freedom, and to perpetual bondage, at the discretion of a slave holding marshal, without even the forms of trial, if they happen to be found within the District of Columbia—the special domain of the Goddess of Liberty! All this, to the everlasting shame of the country, solely for the defence and extension of the "Patriarchal Institution!"

Nor will it be denied, that by a solemn act of Congress passed under the influence of a threatened dissolution of the Union, and under every other possible appliance of

intimidation on the part of the slaveholding interest, the whole territory of the original United States, lying south of 38½ degrees of north latitude, and west of the Mississippi, below the Missouri and south of Georgia—added to the union by purchase, long after the adoption of the Federal Constitution—has been thrown open to the perpetual dominion of slavery with all its bitter consequences to the nation at large, and to posterity. By far the largest portion of our soil is thus doomed by the Federal Government to "a perpetual curse," through the undisguised and menacing action of two hundred and fifty thousand slaveholders, against millions of self-styled freemen! But, it is not possible to enumerate here, half the evils that have been inflicted, that are now endured, and that are threatened as our future inheritance, through the influence of this handful of our fellow citizens on our government. Millions on millions, and scores of millions of public treasure have been sacrificed in one form or another, for the security and gratification of the few who live by the labor and the barter of the bones and sinews of our sable hued brethren, beyond all that has been required for the protection of our lawful commerce, our agriculture, and our manufactures.

It is not my wish, surely, to excite the sordid and selfish passions of any man or body of men, nor to fan the flame of unrighteous indignation toward any portion of our fellow citizens. But the facts in the case ought to be preserved in remembrance. We have rights to defend, privileges to maintain, and duties to perform, all of which demand of us a familiar acquaintance with the principles and proceedings of the men whose imaginary interests come in conflict with our own, and our country's security.

And here I must be permitted to say—without exposure to the charge of apologizing for slavery or its abettors, that I know of no warrant from God for affirming, that the slaveholders of the South are sinners beyond all other

men, nor that they are more brutish, or rebellious against heaven, than thousands who can wash their hands in innocency on the subject of slavery. It is to be recollected that as they were born, so they have been nurtured beneath all the benumbing influences of the system;—that most of them grope in darkness like the blind, as to its moral turpitude and malignant tendencies; that they have been taught from infancy to believe, as firmly as they believe their own existence, that the Bible sanctions it—that they act agreeably to the will of God in continuing it—and that it is so inwrought with all their institutions as to be inseparable from them, except at the expense of the whole social fabric, and the ruin of their own and the fortunes of their posterity. Idle as we know all such reasonings to be, they are yet held by many, as incontrovertible truths from firm, and in some cases, honest conviction. Strange and incredible as this may seem, it yet developes no greater inconsistency than is chargeable on human nature standing in a thousand other positions—chargeable perhaps on ourselves, in relation to other matters deeply involving our interests or prejudices. As heaven bears with us, we may surely bear with them; and when we shall have purified our own bosoms from the lust of power, from the avaricious thirst for gold, from the love of sensual and criminal indulgence, and other passions that war against the throne of God, we shall be better prepared than now, to cast stones at these offenders against the great law of love.

It is trying, I know, to the patience of the patriot, to the humanity of the philanthropist, and the piety of the Christian to contemplate the mighty wrongs inflicted by slavery on the innocent and helpless.

What indeed can be more trying to *patience*, than to listen to the great swelling words of vanity that often flow from the lips of the great men of the South, in their contemptuous comparisons of the free and intelligent

laborers of the North with their own slaves; to mark the intrigue and violence directed with fearful success against Northern industry; and to know that three quarters of the whole revenue of the Union, derived from the enterprise and hard labor of the free States is expended exclusively, in one form or another, for the benefit of the slave States. All this is certainly trying to patience. Job himself could hardly sit easy under it. Still, "the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit." Our passions must be lashed into subjection to the authority that says, "hitherto thou shalt come, but no further." Are not we too, in danger of speaking wickedly concerning oppression, and of speaking loftily?

And, what more trying to the humanity of the *philanthropist*, than to know that nearly three millions of his fellow men, in the midst of this free country, are subjected to the capricious disposal of irresponsible masters,—that let them be maltreated as they may, they have no possible redress,—that no impartial court is open to them;—that no testimony is received from them against a white man;—that they are liable to be whipped, tortured, and murdered, without risk to the life of their assailant;—that wives may be torn from their husbands, and children from their parents, and sold into distant bondage at the pleasure of their lords, and at the certain sacrifice of every instinctive affection, without the possibility of relief! Not indeed that all slaves are thus abused. Most of them, for aught we know, are sufficiently fed and clothed, nursed in sickness, and provided for in old age. Many of them beyond a doubt are treated with kindness, and due respect is paid to the sacredness of their social relations. But this belongs not to the system itself. The slaveholder lies under no other obligation to such a course of conduct, than what arises from regard to conscience, reputation, or self-interest. Law makes his authority absolute, scarcely taking cognizance of any crime he may perpetrate against humanity, in the person of his slave.

And, what more trying to the faith and love of the *Christian*, than the fact, that many for whom the Savior shed his blood, and who are "chosen vessels of mercy," are yet denied the privilege of reading God's holy word, and the means of the full development of their intellectual powers, and Christian spirit;—that they are cut off from a thousand privileges enjoyed by those around them;—that they are exposed to the vile passions of their masters, and compelled to sacrifice virtue, self-respect, and every thing but the hope of heaven, if not even that, at the shrine of lordly concupiscence! All this, and more than could be detailed in hours and days, is trying to the heart of the Northern patriot, philanthropist and Christian—nay more—'tis trying to the heart of Everlasting Love. But, if God forbears his judgments on such offences, do we well to be angry? If he says, Let the offenders alone this year also, shall *we* say, "Cut them down, why cumber they the ground?"

I would yield to the spirit of fanaticism on no subject, and least of all, on one so grave as this, involving principles and interests that divide the opinions, and alienate the affections of men distinguished by depth of understanding and purity of heart. Wild theorizings, vapid declamation, and indiscriminate denouncement of all who "go not with us," ill befit the man who aims to reform his country, and purify her from the guilt and pollution of slavery. I hold it indeed, an absurdity in terms, that any man, formed in the image of his Maker, and innocent of crime, may be held to labor without his own consent, and without wages;—that he may be beaten like a spaniel, goaded like a beast of burden, and trodden under foot like a reptile;—that he may be used as a chattel, bought and sold as merchandize, riven at the pleasure of another from every object of his tenderest attachment, and doomed to a perpetuity of ignorance and sin. But if by any means such an absurdity has become

imbedded among the elements of a man's moral nature—if it seem right to him thus to deface the image of God in his fellow man, and he discover no incongruity between his conduct and the supreme law of equity, but on the contrary feel himself justified at the bar of conscience and Scripture—I pity his delusion—and charge upon him negligence or prejudice in his examination of the subject—but dare not pronounce him a hypocrite and an alien from the commonwealth of Israel, so long as he enjoys the light of God's countenance, relies on the blood of Christ for justification before God, and devotes himself to the duties of active piety. He hath One that judgeth him. The utterance of that judgment is delegated to none. To his own Master, he stands or falls.

II. But, the question is a natural one—HAVE WE NOTHING TO DO, TO RELIEVE OUR CONSCIENCES AND OUR COUNTRY FROM THE GUILT INVOLVED IN THE EXISTENCE AND CONTINUANCE OF SLAVERY. Undoubtedly. Immeasurable responsibilities rest upon us. We have folded our arms too long. We have shut our eyes against the light too obstinately. We have turned a deaf ear to the calls of humanity too often. Something—nay all that is in the power of our hands to do, must be done, unless we are willing to share the guilt and punishment of the slaveholder.

Our first duty is suggested by the object that calls us together to-day—to humble ourselves before God by fasting and prayer. "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and he shall direct thy paths," is an injunction never to be safely overlooked. The Lord is SUPREME among the nations. The king's heart is in his hand. Our rulers, and all who are concerned in their elevation, are but carrying out his sovereign purposes, whether they think so or not. God's counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure. What his counsels are in all their details,

we know not now, but shall know hereafter. It is sufficient at present to be assured, that they will ultimately result in the manifestation of his glory, and the happiness of all who love and obey him.

God hears prayer. He loves to see his people prostrate before him, when evils press upon them, and threaten their country. He commands them to call on him in the day of trouble. It is due to Him to do it. It is due to themselves. Relief can come from no other quarter. The Lord alone raiseth them that are bowed down, and executeth judgment for the oppressed; and when our princes are rebellious and companions of thieves—when every one loveth gifts and followeth after rewards, and fails to relieve the fatherless and them that have none to help them, the Lord alone is our Hope.

Slavery is an evil of no ordinary magnitude. In the progress of more than two hundred and twenty years since its introduction, it has had opportunity to strike its roots deep among our social, civil, literary, and religious institutions, and to spread its branches from one end of the land to the other, and become prolific in fruits of discord, vice, and crime. Nor is it to be torn up by any sudden gust of passion, however violent, nor hewn down by any force of "Northern steel," however strong the arm that wields it. One only Power in the universe can destroy it. To that power, must be our appeal—humble, earnest, and persevering—an appeal uniformly to be followed up by corresponding labors of love, performed in the patience of hope. But it is sometimes said of those who pray with apparent fervency for the extirpation of this deeply rooted evil, that they do nothing else but pray, and therefore their prayers are evidently hypocritical. This is a grave charge, never to be lightly uttered. That it is often a *false* charge, must be clear to every one who forms a judgment of his fellow men according to the word of God. Evils there are, great and appalling, that good men, ardently devoted

to God and their country, know not how to reach;—evils which they fear to touch, lest failing to remove, they aggravate them. Means, which to one mind appear the best adapted to accomplish their removal, appear to another, altogether unfit and dangerous. Habits of thought, general intelligence, constitutional temperament, and even strength of moral principle in the best men, are so wonderfully various, as to account readily for this diversity of judgment. Is not the most sincere and humble Christian often perplexed to know the path of duty? Though satisfied that duty requires him to *act*, may he not be in darkness as to the particular course of action God would have him adopt? And can he be required to "go forward," when to him the voice of Providence seems to say distinctly, "Stand still, and see the salvation of the LORD?" Is caution a doubtful virtue? Does it betray a faithless and unsound heart? So I do not understand it. Could we take the opinions of other men as infallible,—or, had God required us to follow the guidance of one individual or another, as implicitly as his people of old were required to follow Moses, Samuel, and other heaven directed men, all would be plain. But instead of this, God has given us general principles in his word, to regulate our conduct;—then, he has given us understanding, that we may study and apply those principles;—and then, he has required us to use this understanding faithfully, answerable to none but himself. How then does it consist with any man's duty to God, to suspend his own action, on the opinions of others? And if he act agreeably to his own judgment, in the fear of God, who has the right to condemn him as a hypocrite? "Judge not, that ye be not judged; for with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged, and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." Measures that are confidently relied upon by some, for the extirpation of the deadly tumor of slavery from the body politic, are as sincerely

distrusted by others. Some would use the knife and others the plaster. Some would denounce the slaveholder in terms of unmitigated severity, and others would treat him as an erring brother, not yet placed beyond the reach of kindly influences. And who shall decide the comparative merits of these diverse courses of treatment? Is infallibility the claim of any man? Let such a claim pass for what it is worth.

But with some, the spirit of denunciation does not stop when it has visited the slaveholder; passing onward, it falls heavily on all who refuse to bind themselves down to a prescribed system of measures for overwhelming him, and "taking away his goods." Many of the holiest men and purest churches in the land are made to feel the whirlwind of wrath, that consigns them to deeper shame and more intense suffering, than are imprecated on the actual trafficker in human flesh and spirit. Paul himself and the beloved disciple, were they now on earth, preaching in the same style in which they discoursed eighteen hundred years ago, would not escape the fury of the blast. Is this the way to cure the evil? Is it a display of the spirit of Christ? Does it evince the humility and love, which alone find access to the throne of God, and secure his favorable interposition? Better apply caustics to the fresh wound of the burnt child, or a wrenching iron to the broken limb, or gall and vinegar to the death stricken spirit, than adopt measures so revolting to the spirit of humiliation, in the hope of giving deliverance to the country from its direst curse. Till you can extinguish fire by throwing oil upon it, and neutralize the power of alcohol by mingling it with prussic acid, or exhaust the waters of the ocean by hurling firebrands into them, you cannot eradicate slavery from the land, by denouncing every man who prefers his own judgment to yours, as to his course of action on the subject. Clouds of darkness yet rest on the pathway of many, who steadily

fix their eye on the glorious object of universal emancipation;—and humble prayer alone can be relied upon to "make the darkened cloud withdraw." Let us then continue instant in prayer and supplication and we shall not always lack wisdom.

Our second duty is, to diffuse through the land, the spirit of the gospel as widely and thoroughly as possible.

> "This remedy did wisdom find,
> To heal diseases of the mind."

The spirit of the gospel is love, meekness, long suffering and beneficence. It is *diffused*, when exemplified in the exercise of the charity that hopeth all things, and endureth all things, and when inculcated by precept, and enforced by the high and commanding motives deduced from the example and instructions of Christ. The more boldly and strenuously any man contends against the principle of slavery, if he maintain the meeknes and gentleness of Christ, the better. The principle is one, as we believe, that violates a fundamental law of the MORAL universe, and is deeply fraught with pollution and shame. As such, it demands individual and national repentance—the rending of the heart, and the reformation of the life. But how is that repentance to be produced, except by the Spirit of God, taking hold on the inner man, by means of gospel truth, presented to the dispassionate mind, and urged with the tenderness that once exclaimed—"how would I have gathered thy children, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings!" Will the denunciation of the guilty, as enemies of God and humanity, contribute to their penitence? Will the application of opprobrious names produce such an effect? Is the stigmatized felon, and man-stealer, and murderer likely to be won over to virtue's side by the uncourteousness that condemns, ere it has labored to convince him? "Come, let us reason together,"

saith God, when he would bring offenders to repentance; and before man passes judgment on his fellow man, with an authority like that of God; let him assure himself of possessing a divine commission to do it. It is certain that many are not convinced of the moral wrongs of slavery—they hold it to be an institution of heaven, and as capable of vindication as any other divine institution. They are rational men. Some of them are conscientious men. As such, they have claims on our consideration, notwithstanding the deplorable error into which they have fallen. Thick darkness is upon them. It will not be dispelled by the command from *us*, "Let there be light"—but only by the force of argument and entreaty, perseveringly employed in the spirit that would save men's lives and not destroy them. A more copious infusion of the spirit of Christ into the doings of slavery's foes, would contribute much to carry conviction and repentance through the ranks of its friends. Would God that there were a more firm and simple reliance on the almightiness of TRUTH, and the energy of the spirit that cries, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do"—that instead of looking on our Southern brethren as "the chief of sinners," the confession were heard on every side, "Lord! *I* am vile, what shall I answer thee?"—and, that violence and wrath were exchanged for patience and prayerfulness.

Those there are—not few in number either—who in their zeal for the emancipation of the slave, place themselves on the ground of open opposition to the church, the ministry, the Sabbath, the Bible, and nearly every thing else that bears upon it the stamp of Divinity. We judge them not. One there is that judgeth them. But it must be said, in regard to the course they pursue, that it is not dictated by the spirit of the gospel; that its tendencies are to the cursing of mankind, and not to their blessing; that were slavery eradicated at the expense of these institutions, no benefit would result to our country or the world; but

on the contrary, anarchy and confusion, involving the destruction of every civil and social as well as religious right, must inevitably follow.

Others venture not so far as this, but would still depose from the ministry, and cut off from the church of Christ, every man guilty of slave holding, whatever other evidences there be of his devotedness to God; they make no allowance for the infirmities and sinfulness which he shares in common with themselves, but cast him out as "a withered branch," though constrained to acknowledge, that he may belong to the true vine. The same spirit of rash judgment is manifested toward all who question the propriety of their proceedings against the slave holder;—for however sincere and earnest their protestations against the "enormous wrong," they are yet proclaimed to be "pro-slavery men," and unworthy of the confidence of the slave's friend. Strong efforts are made to divide the churches—to alienate the affections of ministers from their people, and of the people from their ministers—to impede the operations of foreign missionary boards, and induce the withdrawal of their accustomed support, and the establishment of opposition societies, whose treasuries shall not be defiled with the free-will offerings of the slave holder. The same spirit, if allowed "free course" will disorganize every benevolent society in the land—break in twain every church—carry anti-slavery politics into every pulpit, and degrade the day of the Lord from its Divine pre-eminence, into a day of hustings for party purposes.*

All this is contrary to the spirit of the gospel. Not so

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* These are points which deserve the special attention of the friends of Zion. All I ask, is careful inquiry. How the *Christian* can approve the course of Gerrit Smith, for example, who advocates *Sabbath* lecturing and lectures himself on that day on "Bible politics," i. e. on Slavery as a political institution; and, discarding every existing church organization, forms new churches on the sole principle of faith in the utility of political anti-slavery associations, and without asking further evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ—I know not. And how the Christian can approve the course of the "Union Missionary Society" and its agents, in their endeavors to obstruct the labors of the long established and God-honored Foreign Mission Boards of our country, when that course involves so much misrepresentation and false coloring, is equally unintelligible. They charge these Boards with sanctioning and encour-

did Paul, nor Paul's Master. They deprecated divisions. "He that is not against us is for us." With the maxim "Divide and conquer" they had no fellowship. "Love one another," was the imperative injunction that fell from all lips, "taught of God." "Be not righteous overmuch, neither make thyself overwise," is a caution that deserves to be well pondered, by those who would not destroy themselves, but advance a glorious cause to an early and triumphant consummation. The omnipotent energy of the gospel alone, will ever realize the hopes we fondly cherish, of our country's deliverance from the curse of slavery.

Of all the *political* evils existing in the land, none other bears comparison with this. It tarnishes our national honor, and degrades us in the eyes of every civilized nation; it diminishes self respect, and makes the American citizen abroad, ashamed of his country; it sacrifices our pecuniary interests, and exposes us constantly to the calamities of foreign aggression and intestine commotion. It is rapidly undermining the pillars of our government—

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aging slavery; but the charge is false, or else it lies with equal force against themselves. Do *they* receive into the treasury no fruits of "unrequited toil?" Are none of the contributers to their funds first enriched by their traffic with the South? Is that gain ever refused, because acquired through the cotton, and rice, and sugar, &c. &c., which are the products of slave labor only? Or, does the fruit of slave labor become purified, and acceptable to God, by passing through the hands of exclusive Anti-Slavery men, when it is an abomination in the hand of a slave holder himself? I say not that any slave holder ought to be asked to contribute to the funds of a missionary board; but if it be unlawful to ask *him* to do this, it is equally unlawful to ask the man who takes the products of his plantation, and makes gain by them. It is believed, that few men if any are to be found, who refuse to traffic with the South, when they can increase their wealth by it. Anti-Slavery men are as ready to do it as others. But, if the wealth of the South is too polluted to flow into "the treasury of the Lord," ought they to have no fears that its influx into their own pockets may pollute them also? Is their own counting house a better purifier of ill gotten gains than the Lord's treasury? Dare they feed and clothe their families, and support their ministers with those gains which they make out of the "unrequited toil of the slave," when they charge it as a sin against God to educate with them the heathen for heaven? It is not true, that the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions, or the Baptist Foreign Board, or any other Board, encourage slavery more than those who condemn them for declining to have "lot or part" in a political Anti-Slavery organization. They receive money for their appropriate objects, from whomsoever it comes, asking no questions for conscience sake,—just as Paul would do in like circumstances. Let there be more *reflection* on this subject, and more prayer to God, and less confidence reposed in men who seem to have lost sight of every other human duty, than that of emancipating the slave from temporal bondage, and all the difficulties felt on the subject by some conscientious Christians, will quickly vanish.

disturbing the harmony of its action, and producing universal discontent, and conviction of insecurity.

If then as a *moral* evil it requires moral and religious action for its removal, it cannot be denied, that as a *political* evil it requires political action in some shape, to remove it. But that such political action succeed, it must stand approved to God. Yet as commonly understood and carried out, such action involves as fearful a sacrifice of the law of love, as slavery itself. It indulges and vindicates hatred and revenge, misrepresentation and "false witness." It stops at nothing, to overpower its opponent. "All is fair in politics," is the avowed maxim that guides its course—a maxim that has the "Father of lies" for its author, and "the heart that deviseth mischiefs continually," for its home. I know not how a man can cherish a lofty and overbearing spirit toward his neighbor, and be innocent;—nor how the spirit of party, as commonly displayed in false criminations, reproachful epithets, and wholesale slander, consists with duty either to God or man. Nor can a political party be organized to secure universal emancipation, on purer principles than those that lie at the foundation of other existing parties. The materials that compose all parties are the same—the good and the bad, the precious and the vile are mingled in their ranks. Allow that the leaders of the Anti-Slavery movement are as pure minded men as earth can boast, and as disinterested and generous in their aims as the angels of light—yet who are to sustain them? Who are to participate their labors and triumphs? None others than those who now sustain the leaders of other political parties. The mass of the nation can never be made *Christian* abolitionists by party manœuvrings. And unless they are made *Christian* abolitionists, they will be governed by no higher motives, and adopt no other measures to secure their object, than the members of other political parties.

We have demonstration of this already, to some extent.

Party lines are drawn. An organization is created to defend them. Every lawful means, to say the least, is used to enlist new partisans on the side of God and liberty. Strong excitement prevails. Every variety of passion is aroused, and reason scarce holds her throne amid the conflict of the elements around her. The cry, "slavery shall be overthrown," goes forth, to be met by the cry, "touch not the peculiar institution, at your peril." Madness and fury on either side, enkindle madness and fury on the other. Each contending party is strong in the belief of the righteousness of its cause—and both press onward, for victory over its antagonist, rather than to vindicate the cause of God and humanity. And how sure is the result in such cases, that "judgment is turned away backward, and justice standeth afar off—truth falleth in the streets and equity cannot enter; yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil, maketh himself a prey!"

But allow that the friends of emancipation succeed in acquiring the political ascendancy by such means, and proceed to proclaim liberty to the captive, or freedom to the slave,—is it not certain that the further result will be, the dissolution of the Union, and the confirmation of the slave's bondage? Will the victorious party in such a strife escape the common fate of exulting victors—to be crushed in their turn by other and more revolting weapons? There are BETTER MEANS to be used than these—means to which reference has been made already. But it may be asked, shall we not show the slave holder at the ballot box, that we have no sympathies with his oppressions, and will not cease to bear testimony against his wickedness? It is every man's right, and I say not that it is not every man's duty to do so. But this he may do, in the exercise of the purest affections of the heart, without encountering the hazards of a party organization. It must be difficult, not to say impossible for the man of wakeful moral sensibility to encourage the

civil elevation of one, whose hand rivets the chain on the limbs of the unoffending negro. Nor does he do this, when he simply withholds his suffrage, or bestows it independently of all party bonds. While I would not myself knowingly have an agency in the promotion of a voluntary and self justifying slave holder to any station of influence in the councils of the nation, neither would I bind any man by the ties of party to do likewise, when his convictions of duty to God and his country command him to pursue a different course. I would not denounce him as the friend of slavery and the foe of humanity, when he prefers a slave holder to one whose character in other respects is yet more exceptionable, in his judgment. Leave every man free to act, solely upon his own responsibilities to conscience and to God. Vain is the help of man in the decision of this great moral question. Our hope is in the Lord alone. Blessed be his name!—there is not a little stern virtue and undissembled piety in the land;—and we have more than "the seven thousand" of Israel, who have not yet bowed the knee to the Baal of Slavery. But collect them all into "the rank and file" of a party, and they are but a little "company of kids" facing the lions, driven from their lairs by the swellings of Jordan. Connect with them now, thousands on thousands of the godless and the selfish, who have hitherto arranged themselves under other banners, and fought other and less sacred battles—is their strength increased? If they present a more formidable *front* to the enemy, have they more disciplined courage, more moral energy, and better assurance of the presence of "the God of battles" with them than before? Nay! a party thus composed of clay and iron like Nebuchadnezzar's image, is sure to fall in pieces by its own weight. No political combination can ever be safely trusted with the cause of moral truth, or evangelical principle. Within certain limits, God may use it to accomplish his gracious purposes; but those

fulfilled, he dashes it to the ground, like the potter's misshapen vessel. All labor expended on such an object is but sowing the wind, and reaping the whirlwind. Still it is said, that the question is one of that high moral nature, which demands the cordial union and harmonious co-operation of all the friends of God and man. True. But the point to be settled is, whether this union and co-operation are to be secured by a wordly and carnal policy, or by a firm adherence to the simple and eternal principles of the gospel. Those principles reject the use of carnal weapons. Political organization is a "carnal weapon," as truly as the sword and the battle axe. It summons into exercise all the worst passions of our nature; and if it spare the life-blood, it spares not the reputation which alone gives value to life. But—if questions of a high moral nature are to be settled by the force of political organization—why stop short at the subject of Slavery? This surely is not the only moral question that demands the cordial union and harmonious co-operation of all the friends of God and man. The *Sabbath* is the nation's bulwark. Is it to be defended by the strength of a political organization? Vice and crime are the nation's shame and curse. Are they to be put down by a political organization? It is a question of greater magnitude than all others, shall the God of heaven or the prince of hell rule the destinies of our country?—and it is to be decided by the union and co-operation of his people; is that union and co-operation to be secured by a political organization? To questions like these, you at once and emphatically answer, No! But why not? Let a political party be formed, strong enough to elect to office the men who fear God and work righteousness, and not only slavery, but Sabbath profanation, intemperance, licentiousness, fraud, and every species of villainy will be ruled out of the land together. A glorious result! and one that every friend of God and man prays and labors for! But who has ever

dreamed—at least since the days of Cromwell, of accomplishing this by a political organization! The project is Utopian. We justly rely on God alone, in the use of means of his own appointment, to banish slavery from our land, and all sin from the world. Political organizations are *not* means of his appointment. This gospel, whispering peace, and commanding rebellious passions to repose, is the sole instrumentality he honors.

I have thus used a liberty, which I suppose to be conceded to every minister of the gospel, on proper occasions, to express frankly my views on a subject that deservedly takes strong hold on the public feeling of the country, at the present crisis. I would diminish no man's interest in it, but if possible give to the feelings and influence of all, a direction that will ensure heaven's approval and blessing. No reviling nor threatening will deter the faithful servant of Christ from a free expression of those sentiments he deliberately forms, on the basis of God's word, in regard to any moral question involved in the political strifes of his fellow citizens. He is bound to reprove and admonish the erring, with meekness indeed, but with a fearlessness, and firmness of resolve, that shall leave him unsuspected of making his voice the mere echo of the prevailing sentiments of the community in which God has placed him.

I have aimed to set before you very briefly—and I am aware it has been done very imperfectly—the rise and progress of slavery, in this boasted "land of the free;" the turpitude and wickedness inseparable from the system in all lands; its pernicious influence on the morals, the education, the harmony and prosperity of the country; and also—to point out the grand means of meeting and vanquishing the evil; viz. personal humiliation before God, and the widest possible diffusion of the pure and benign spirit of the gospel. And if in doing this, I have failed to

leave on your minds the distinct impression that our condition is an alarming one, and that we have much to do to change its aspects;—that our eyes must be turned to God alone, and to no human arm; that the sin and the shame belong to *us*, as well as to our brethren of the South—and to the subjects of the government, as well as to its officers —my labor is lost.

But here I must leave you—only reminding you that the ensuing year will furnish a thousand opportunities to inform yourselves and instruct others, as to the duty owing to those who "speak wickedly concerning oppression." Improve such opportunities. Preserve calmness of spirit. "The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God." Possess your souls in patience. Deal charitably with your erring brethren. Walk humbly and prayerfully before God. Remember that you are to give an account to the Judge of quick and dead, and order your whole conversation accordingly. And when the day arrives, for which all other days are made, may you be able to appeal to Him who sits upon the throne, for the justness of all your principles, the purity of your motives, the simplicity of your trust in God, and the devotedness of your lives to the accomplishment of the grand purposes of divine benevolence toward a world enslaved by sin, and redeemed only by the blood that cries from Calvary, "Father! forgive!"